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The Medieval Synthesis and Unified Sensibility : Their Definition and Interrelation

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THE MEDIEVAL SYNTHESIS AND UNIFIED SENSIBILITY:
THEIR DEFINITION AND INTER-RELATION

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

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LIFE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century has been aptly called the "Century of Progress." And from the standpoint of material achievement no one can deny it this epithet. However, in reference to the spiritual side of man, the twentieth century has been noted for two revivals: revivals of certain spiritual interests of past centuries. One revival is in the world of philosophy; the other in the world of letters.

The former revival has been called the neo-Thomist or even the neo-scholastic movement. This movement centers in a revived interest in and study and just appreciation of the philosophical works of the great medieval philosopher, St. Thomas Aquinas. Some of the current leaders in this movement are Jacques Maritain and Etienne Gilson of France, and Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins of the United States.

The revival in the world of letters is the renewed study of the works of that group of seventeenth century English poets called the "metaphysical poets." Perhaps the greatest name attached to this revival is that of Herbert J. C. Grierson. But the

critic who gave the greatest impetus to this movement is T. S. Eliot. He gave this impetus through a short critical essay, "The Metaphysical Poets," written in 1925. In that essay Mr. Eliot used a term which has been reiterated often in the literary criticism of the metaphysical poets. That term is "unified sensibility."

Likewise, in the writings of the neo-Thomists there is a term that is re-echoed almost as a refrain. That term is "medieval synthesis."

Now, it is interesting to note that even though each term is often used almost as a motif for its particular movement, authors seem to use the terms freely with different connotations at different times. This sometimes leaves the reader with a vague notion as to the precise meaning of the term in question.

A further consideration worthy of note is that, just as philosophy has a fundamental relation to poetry, so also does the term medieval synthesis, properly understood, have a definite relation to unified sensibility, properly understood.

The purpose of this thesis will be, first, to define carefully the terms medieval synthesis and unified sensibility, unpacking the full content of their meaning so that the terms may be properly understood. With a clear exposition of the meaning of these terms established, we will analyze the inter-relation between unified sensibility and medieval synthesis.

A collateral purpose will be to define carefully and

adequately the opposites of the two terms, namely, "Renaissance dichotomy" and "dissociated sensibility." Similarly, we will then demonstrate their proper inter-relation.

Finally, we will substantiate the validity of this dual inter-relation by example. We will examine two seventeenth-century poems dealing with a fundamental issue in human experience, death, or the attitude toward death. We will discover the inter-relation between the medieval synthesis and unified sensibility in Crashaw's poetry about death found in his poem A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable St. Teresa. Contrariwise, we will recognize the inter-relation of the Renaissance dichotomy and dissociated sensibility as exemplified in John Donne's poetry about death in the Divine Poem, "Death Be Not Proud."

CHAPTER II

THE MEDIEVAL SYNTHESIS

The first matter to be taken up is to define clearly and adequately the term medieval synthesis. Although various meanings are attached to this there is one comprehensive connotation which includes by implication all other connotations. Medieval synthesis in this connotation is the system which St. Thomas organized and which combines into one logical system the truths of philosophy with the truths of theology. Henry S. Lucas in his work The Renaissance and the Reformation employs the term in this connotation:

The significance of St. Thomas' scholarly work consisted in the synthesis which he made of the revived philosophical doctrines of Aristotle and the theological convictions of the Middle Ages. At the base of his system lay the Aristotelian classification of knowledge. Here the different sciences dealing with man's environment found their place. These branches of learning expanded the work of Aristotle and after some observation of nature and rudimentary experimentation subjected them to Aristotle's philosophical conceptions. At the summit of this vast pyramid of learning appeared the doctrines taught by the divinely instituted church and revealed to her. Thus the entire realm of learning whether sacred or profane was brought together into one harmonious system. Christian principles animated thought on all human activities, economic, artistic, and political.¹

1 Henry S. Lucas, The Renaissance and the Reformation,

Further elucidation will be given to this general connotation of the term medieval synthesis if we provide some pertinent quotations from the contemporary Thomistic authority, Hans Meyer:

St. Thomas was above all else a theologian and he should be evaluated first of all in regard to his solution of the great medieval problem of harmonizing faith and science in one great synthesis.

With the appearance of . . . St. Thomas on the scene . . . philosophy is now recognized as an independent science in its principles, methods and subject matter. At the same time its conclusions are reconcilable with faith and theology. . . For St. Thomas there can be no separation of faith and science; no separation of philosophy from the teachings of revelation. . . . St. Thomas . . . denied any contradiction between natural and supernatural truth.²

One final quotation, this one from Basil Willey's penetrating work, The Seventeenth Century Background, should complement the explanations already cited and thus give us a well-rounded and adequate exposition of the general connotation of the term:

Scholasticism was, in the main, a synthesis of two great traditions inherited by the Middle Ages, those of pagan antiquity and Latin Christianity. In St. Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle is harmonized with Paul and Augustine, metaphysics with revelation, reason with faith Thomism blends Aristotle with Christian theology. In scholasticism, faith is indeed above reason, but not contrary to it; and the chief aim of this teaching is to show that reason when exercising itself upon its proper object, must necessarily lead towards faith, or confirm its dogmas.³

New York, 1934, 129-130.

2 Hans Meyer, The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, Frederic Eckhoff, trans., St. Louis, 1944, 29, 38.

3 Basil Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, London, 1934, 13-14.

In his synthesis St. Thomas performed the momentous task of harmonizing the truths of philosophy with the truths of theology, the truths of science with the truths of religion, the truths of reason with the revealed truths of faith. And now that the definition of the term is established, it would be advantageous to outline briefly the core of this medieval synthesis as organized by St. Thomas:

Man is an agent and must act for an end. And that end must be a good, since the will cannot tend toward an object except under the aspect of good. Good as the object of man's volition is an end, and "since that which is supreme in any genus is the cause of that genus, God is the supreme good and last end and the first cause in the order of final causality."⁴ Thus the struggle for God, the Summum Bonum and the Last End in Whom happiness is to be found in its completeness. Thus, objectively, man's last end is God, whereas, subjectively, man's last end is the beatitude which comes in attaining God.

A proximate end is an end ordered to and leading to the last end. Man's proximate end is two-fold: the conservation and perfection of himself, and, secondly, promoting the natural good of his neighbor. Man attains his proximate and ultimate ends through human acts, i.e., acts arising from his intellect and will.

⁴ Met., Δ , I, 993 b, 22.

The human acts by which man attains his proximate and ultimate ends are acts of the human virtues. These virtues fall into three classes: the intellectual virtues, the infused moral virtues, and the supernatural virtues.

The intellectual virtues are wisdom, understanding, science, prudence, and art. Faith, hope, and charity are the supernatural virtues. Fortitude, temperance, prudence, and justice are the infused moral virtues.

The supernatural virtues of faith (infused with grace into the soul at baptism with the other supernatural virtues and infused moral virtues) overcomes the darkness of the intellect brought on by original sin. Faith shows man his last end, God, and the means of attaining Him which are the doctrine and practice of the Catholic Church. The virtues of hope and charity overcome the weakness of will induced by original sin, and give man strength in pursuing his last end and in using the proper means thereto.

The infused moral virtues of prudence and justice greatly assist man in performing those actions which will lead him to his proximate and ultimate ends. The infused moral virtues of fortitude and temperance control the sense appetites with their concupiscences which, left alone, would hinder the proper exercise of the virtues of prudence and temperance and of the other virtues. Thus fortitude checks the irrational tendencies or the concupiscence (pride) in the irascible appetite; temperance controls the concupiscences (lust, covetousness) in the concupiscible appetite.

So we see that acts of virtue in the three classes mentioned lead man to his proximate end and to his ultimate end, God, and to his perfect happiness. The perfection of the philosophy of life embodied in the medieval synthesis is, in reality, the perfection of the supernatural virtue of charity. Rev. Adolphe Tanquerey, S.S., in his ascetical classic The Spiritual Life epitomizes this perfection for us:

Charity rightly conceived and rightly practiced comprises all the virtues; not only faith and hope, but even the moral virtues. This is true in the sense that he who loves God and the neighbor for God's sake is ready to practice one and all the virtues the moment conscience makes him aware of the obligation. As a matter of fact, one cannot truly love God above all things and not want to observe His commandments and even some of His counsels. Besides, the proper function of charity is that of directing all our acts towards God, our last end, and hence of controlling the acts of all the Christian virtues. One may say that a growth in charity is attended by a positive growth in the other virtues as well.⁵

Consequently, according to the medieval synthesis of St. Thomas every human act of man, whether that act be an intellectual virtue, or a moral virtue, or a supernatural virtue, leads man towards his last end, God. Such, briefly, is the outline of St. Thomas's philosophy of life, his medieval synthesis.

However in our thesis, we will apply the medieval synthesis and the philosophy of life which it embodies to our study of poetry.

⁵ Rev. Adolphe Tanquerey, S.S., The Spiritual Life, Herman Brandeis, S.S., trans., 2nd ed., Tournay, 1930, 475-476.

In general, poetry may be defined briefly as the expression in language of the poet's emotional reaction to the "beautiful" in human experience. The quality of a poet's reaction to the "beautiful" in human experience is determined by the philosophy of life he follows. This philosophy is implied and reflected in the poet's expression of such an emotional reaction. From this observation, it should be clear what general application the term medieval synthesis has to the study of poetry.

We would, therefore, like to use a term which would bring the general connotation of the term medieval synthesis to a specific application to poetry. Since poetry is a humanistic pursuit, an ideal term would connote the medieval synthesis as the philosophical basis of humanism in its best sense. Jacques Maritain has provided us a term which has just such a connotation. The term is "theocentric humanism." Consequently, theocentric humanism will be used interchangeably with medieval synthesis in this thesis. Before giving Maritain's definition of theocentric humanism, we should give his definition of humanism in general:

Let us say that humanism (and such a definition can itself be developed along very divergent lines) essentially tends to render man more truly human and to make his original greatness manifest by causing him to participate in all that can enrich him in nature and in history. It at once demands that man make use of all the potentialities he holds within him, his creative powers and the life of reason, and labours to make the powers of the physical world the instruments of his freedom.⁶

6 Jacques Maritain, True Humanism, New York, 1938, xii.

We reject other contrary interpretations of this widely used term and insist that humanism, in its best and truest sense, is a movement that would have a man live as truly human a life as possible. In reality, the pursuits of humanism as understood here are part of man's fulfillment of his proximate end as given by St. Thomas; namely, the conservation and perfection of himself and the promoting of the natural good of his neighbor. As humanism as defined by Maritain helps man fulfill his proximate end in life, so Maritain's definition of theocentric humanism relates those humanistic pursuits to man's Last End: "The first kind of humanism (theocentric humanism) recognizes that the center for man is God; it implies the Christian conception of man as at once a sinner and redeemed, and the Christian conception of grace and freedom."⁷ M. M. Mahood, in his book *Poetry and Humanism*, annotates this definition for us:

Theocentric humanism does not demur at the full and uninhibited use of natural gifts; rather does it view such use as an obligation, since these gifts are themselves bestowed by God. But for the theocentric humanist, this development of the powers revealed by a new self-consciousness does not sever man from his vertical allegiance—his dependence on God, his spiritual limitations as a fallen being, and his spiritual potentialities as a redeemed creature.⁸

Basil Willey in different words describes the end toward which

7 Ibid., 19.

8 M. M. Mahood, Poetry and Humanism, London, 1950, 19.

theocentric humanism is directed: "Nothing short of the Supreme Good, God Himself, can be his end. Thus man by his very nature is orientated towards the supernatural world; he was created for beatitude, and he has supernatural grace to aid him in attaining it."⁹

In this thesis, therefore, the term theocentric humanism will be often used as a synonym for the medieval synthesis. Actually, theocentric humanism is humanism with the medieval synthesis as its basis.

The humanistic pursuit of the poet is to perceive the beautiful in human experience and to express his emotional reaction to it. In this pursuit the poet is constantly striving to reconcile rival claims: the claims of flesh and the claims of spirit; of senses and of intellect; of emotion and of thought; of body and of soul. For in his poetry the poet must express an emotional experience. This experience is, first, the intuition of the "beautiful" in an object known to the intellect through the agency of the senses of seeing and hearing. This experience is, next, an emotional reaction in both his sense and intellectual faculties to the "beauty" perceived. The poet must reconcile in his expression of this experience, i.e., his poetry, the claims of both the senses and the intellect, and of both the thought and the emotions. He must express the "beautiful" through the language of

9 Willey, *Seventeenth Century Background*, 111.

sense images in such a way that, not only will the "beauty" be re-created for the intellect and the sense faculties, but the proportionate emotion will be re-aroused in the intellect and sense faculties. His poetry must appeal to both intellect and senses and reconcile their respective claims. St. Thomas in his synthesis gives the fundamental principle which makes such a reconciliation possible:

Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty. But they differ logically, for goodness properly relates to the appetite (goodness being what all things desire); and therefore it has the aspect of an end (the appetite being a kind of movement towards a thing.) On the other hand, beauty relates to the cognitive faculty; for beautiful things are those which please when seen.¹⁰

The reconciliation which St. Thomas's doctrine makes between intellect and sense will become clearer, I believe, with Maritain's commentary:

St. Thomas who was as simple as he was wise defined the beautiful as what gives pleasure on sight; id quod visum placet. The four words say all that is necessary: a vision, that is to say, an intuitive knowledge and a joy. The beautiful is what gives joy, not all joy, but joy in knowledge; not the joy peculiar to the act of knowing, but a joy superabounding and overflowing from such an act because of the object known. If a thing exalts and delights the soul by the bare fact of its being given to the intuition of the soul, it is good to apprehend, it is beautiful. . . . In man only knowledge derived through the senses possesses fully the intuitivity necessary for the perception of the beautiful. So also man can certainly enjoy purely intelligible beauty, but

¹⁰ St. Thomas Aquinas, S.T.I, 5, 5, ad 1, Summa Theologica, trans., Fathers of the English Dominican Province, London, 1920, I, 59.

the beautiful which is connatural to man is that which comes to delight the mind through the senses and their intuition. Such also is the peculiar beauty of our art, which works on sensible matter for the joy of the spirit. It would fain so persuade itself that paradise is not lost. It has the savour of the terrestrial paradise because it restores for a brief moment the simultaneous peace and delight of the mind and the senses.

.....
 It is important, however, to observe that in the beauty which has been termed connatural to man and is peculiar to human art this brilliance of form, however purely intelligible it may be in itself, is apprehended in the sensible and by the sensible and not separately from it. The intuition of artistic beauty so stands at the opposite pole from the abstraction of scientific truth. For in the former case it is precisely through the apprehension of sense that the light of being penetrates the mind.¹¹

Lengthy authoritative quotations have been given here to establish the fact that St. Thomas not only reconciled the claims of philosophy and theology, faith and reason, but also the claims of intellect and sense, thought and emotion, spirit and flesh. A pertinent quotation from Michael F. Moloney's dissertation on Donne will serve to draw our treatment of the medieval synthesis to a close:

Wholesomeness and wholeness, these were the special attributes of St. Thomas's teaching. He was rightly the Universal Doctor. Had he been less, he would not have been adequate for the times. For he was called to heave into place the keystone of the medieval synthesis. God and Man, Soul and Body, Matter and Form, Flesh and Spirit, the eternal and unchanging relation of these, each to the other, must be finally and definitely stated.¹²

11 Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, J. F. Scanlan, trans., New York, 1939, 23-24, 25-26.

12 Michael F. Moloney, John Donne: His Flight from Medievalism, Urbana, Illinois, 1944, 79.

CHAPTER III

THE RENAISSANCE DICHOTOMY

Renaissance dichotomy is a term which is used in various connotations. The most general connotation attached to the term refers to that effect of the false humanism of the pagan Renaissance which so emphasized man's independence in this world that he became independent of the next world and of his Creator. The Renaissance dichotomy is the antithesis of the medieval synthesis. The different connotations of the former term differ more in degree than in kind, but the most general connotation used is the one already cited: the independence of man from God in his activity and the independence of the claims of this world from those of the next world.

Renaissance dichotomy in its least divisive meaning is what Maritain calls "anthropocentric humanism." According to this false humanism man in his activity combines faith with reason, philosophy with theology (a naturalistic deism), sense with intellect, thought with emotion, flesh with spirit, body with soul - but for one end: man's own natural happiness in this world! God is divorced from the picture; supernatural beatitude is no longer

the goal towards which man's human activity is directed. Maritain gives his definition of anthropocentric humanism: "The second kind of humanism believes that man is his own center, and therefore the center of all things. It implies a naturalistic conception of man and of freedom."¹

In his essay "Christianity and the New Age" Christopher Dawson elucidates the significance of anthropocentric humanism and indicates the internal principle within it which is the germ causing its subsequent internal divisions:

The Renaissance had its beginning in the self-discovery, the self-realization and the self-exaltation of man. Medieval man had attempted to base his life on the supernatural. His ideal of knowledge was not the adventurous quest of the human mind exploring its own kingdom; it was an intuition of the eternal verities which is itself an emanation from the Divine Intellect. The men of the Renaissance, on the other hand, turned away from the eternal and the absolute to the world of nature and human experience. They rejected their dependence on the supernatural, and vindicated their independence and supremacy in the temporal order. But thereby they were gradually led by an internal process of logic to criticize the principles of their own knowledge and to lose confidence in their own freedom. The self-affirmation of man gradually led to the denial of the spiritual foundations of his freedom and knowledge. This tendency shows itself in every department of modern thought. In philosophy it leads from the dogmatic rationalism of Descartes and the dogmatic empiricism of Locke to the radical scepticism of Hume and the subjectivism of later German thought.

.....
 Ever since the Renaissance the centrifugal tendencies in our civilization have destroyed its spiritual unity and divided its spiritual forces. The Western mind has turned away from the contemplation of the absolute and the eternal to the knowledge of the particular and contingent. It has made man

1 Maritain, True Humanism, 19.

the measure of all things and has sought to emancipate human life from its dependence on the supernatural. Instead of the whole intellectual and social order being subordinated to spiritual principles, every activity has declared its independence, and we see politics, economics, science, and art organizing themselves as autonomous kingdoms which owe no allegiance to any higher power.²

Nicholas Berdyaev further assesses anthropocentric humanism in

The Meaning of History:

Humanism, as its name implies, denotes the elevation and setting up of man in the center of the universe. . . . It has been said that humanism discovered the human individuality and gave it full play, freeing it from its medieval subjection and directing it upon free paths of self-affirmation and creation. But humanism also contained a diametrically opposite principle, that of man's abasement, of the exhaustion of his creative powers and of his general enfeeblement. For humanism, by regarding man as part of nature, transferred the center of gravity of the human personality from the center to the periphery. It divorced the natural from the spiritual man. It divorced him from the interior significance and the divine center of life, from the deepest foundations of man's very nature; and it then gave him the freedom of creative development. In fact, humanism denied that man was the image and likeness of God; that he was the reflection of the Divine Being. . . . The Christian consciousness of man began to lose its strength. And this, in its turn, gave rise to a self-destructive dialectic within humanism.³

Just as we have taken theocentric humanism to be a synonym for medieval synthesis for the purposes of this thesis, so also do we consider anthropocentric humanism to be a synonym for the Renais-

2 Christopher Dawson, "Christianity and the New Age," Essays in Order, ed. Christopher Dawson, New York, 1931, 160-1, 205.

3 Nicholas Berdyaev, The Meaning of History, George Reavey trans., London, 1936, 140-141.

sance dichotomy. Anthropocentric humanism, as we have observed, implies the divorce of man's secular goals from his eternal goal, but it does not in itself imply the division of faith from reason, philosophy from theology (naturalistic deism), religion from science, body from soul, thought from emotion, intellect from sense, or flesh from spirit. However, it contains within itself, as Dawson and Berdyaev have indicated, the internal principle which eventually leads to the division of all those fundamental correlatives mentioned. These same correlatives St. Thomas was able to reconcile and unite in his medieval synthesis.

Even though we employ the term Renaissance dichotomy in this limited sense, we will analyze some of the major divisions which it also connotes. Thus we can contrast the medieval synthesis in its fulness with the great antithetical divisions which the Renaissance dichotomy induced by its implied rejection of that synthesis.

Since the medieval synthesis is a philosophical synthesis, we will briefly discuss the doctrines of the three chief philosophers who contributed most to the Renaissance dichotomy, namely, William Occam, Francis Bacon, and Renee Descartes.

William Occam, the first of the philosophers called "modernist", died only three quarters of a century after St. Thomas. It is ironic that the greatest of the "moderate realists" was so close in history to the first of the "modernists", the "father of nominalism." Occam was a nominalist because he denied that uni-

versals had their fundament in things, that they existed outside the mind, that they had objective reality. Consequent upon these nominalistic principles was Occam's assertion that, since universals do not exist outside the mind, we cannot know God and theology by reason, but by revelation only. Thus Occam drives the fundamental wedge of the Renaissance dichotomy, the wedge between philosophy and theology. He loosens the keystone of the medieval synthesis.

Henry S. Lucas summarizes Occam's position:

His (Occam's) scepticism led him to deny the existence of types outside the mind. Thus he would argue that horses indeed did exist, but the general concept horse possessed no objective validity. . . . Ockham denied the power of the mind to penetrate into the secrets of God. Thus he claimed that philosophy and theology were so distinct that the first could not serve as handmaid to the second. Theology was the science of God's authoritative revelation and could not be accounted for by human reason.⁴

Since God cannot be known by reason according to Occam, but only by revelation, the bridge St. Thomas built between philosophy and theology is hopelessly severed.

The cleavage which Occam effected led Francis Bacon, a later philosopher, to enunciate his principle of the "two-fold truth." Basil Willey gives a digest of Bacon's position:

He (Bacon) is concerned to insist that Truth is two-fold. There is truth of religion and truth of science; and these different kinds of truth must be kept separate. This posi-

⁴ Lucas, Renaissance and Reformation, 134.

tion is the inevitable result of any attempt to combine nominalism in philosophy with acceptance of religious dogma, and in this respect Bacon belongs with Duns Scotus and Occam. If you hold that individual "things" are alone real, mere flatus vocis: if you do this, and yet cling to a body of doctrine like the Christian which implies much else is "real" besides "things," you have no alternative but to accept the strange dichotomy of "Truth," and to try, as far as possible, to keep the two kinds from contaminating each other.⁵

In driving Occam's postulates to their logical conclusions, and in stating, as Willey paraphrases, that "it is a fallacy to try to confirm the truths of religion by the principles of science - this is another example of the mingling of things divine and human."⁶

Bacon completed the dichotomy of philosophy and theology, faith and reason, religion and science to which Occam's "razor" had dealt the initial incision. What is more, the split which Bacon effected laid the basis for the rationalism and naturalism that was to follow. Occam first jarred the keystone of the medieval synthesis; Bacon completely loosened it; Descartes only had to remove the keystone and the destruction of the medieval synthesis would be consummated and the full dichotomy of the Renaissance would be effected.

In his book St. Thomas Jacques Maritain has pin-pointed the shaking effects which the dichotomy of Descartes brought about:

5 Willey, Seventeenth Century Background, 27.

6 Ibid., 29.

In the sixteenth century, and more particularly in the age of Descartes, the interior hierarchies of the virtue of reason were shattered. Philosophy abandoned theology to assert its own claim to be considered the supreme science, and the mathematical science of the sensible world and its phenomena taking precedence at the same time over metaphysics, the human mind began to profess independence of God and Being. Independence of God: that is to say, of the supreme object of all intelligence, Whom it accepted only half-heartedly until it finally rejected the intimate knowledge of Him supernaturally procured by grace and revelation. Independence of being, that is to say, of the connatural object of the mind as such, against which it ceased to measure itself humbly, until it finally undertook to deduct it entirely from the seeds of geometrical clarity, which it conceived to be innate in itself.⁷

Maritain mentions that after philosophy had abandoned theology, philosophy reduced itself to the mathematical science of the sensible world and to its phenomena which took precedence over metaphysics.

In his thought-provoking study The Seventeenth Century Background Basil Willey states that in its pursuit of truth the seventeenth century "discovered two main kinds of certainty, one objective or external, the other subjective or internal."⁸ Now, the "certainty" which predominated was what Maritain calls the "mathematical science of the sensible world and its phenomena" and what Willey calls the "objective external certainty." Willey

7 Jacques Maritain, St. Thomas Aquinas, J. F. Scanlan, trans., London, 1933, 91.

8 Willey, Seventeenth Century Background, 76.

further describes the two main certainties of the seventeenth century:

In respect of the external world that account was "truest" which explained the mechanics of causation; and the most "real" of the properties of things were those which could be mathematically expressed. The internal certainties, as we have seen, were chiefly relevant in the regions of faith and of ethics, where truth came to mean that which is vouched for by "the inner light". . . . These two orders of certainty, objective and subjective, correspond to Descartes's division of reality into Extension (matter) and Thought (mind, soul).⁹

Descartes's philosophy starts with two unproved certainties which for him are first principles and whose validity is known by intuition alone: the certainty of one's own existence and the certainty of God's existence. From these two main certainties man can conclude to the certainty that the objects of mathematical thought are real.

It was necessary that Descartes postulate those two first principles since he could not prove them to be true according to his own philosophical tenets. As Willey pointed out, Descartes divided all reality into two substances: Extension (matter) and Thought (mind, soul). Throughout the universe, there are mathematical objects subject to mechanical laws. This is the substance Extension. It alone of the two substances can be known mathematically, because it alone is extended. It alone is the external and objective certainty. Within each individual, on the other hand,

9 Ibid., 76.

is his "thinking ego," his soul, his mind. This substance which Descartes calls Thought is internal and subjective. Since this substance is not extended, it cannot be known mathematically. The truth of the certainty of this substance is an unproved postulate of Descartes. But, according to the principles of Descartes, only that is true which can be clearly and distinctly known. And for Descartes the only clear and distinct knowledge is mathematical knowledge. Therefore the only substance which can be proved to be true is Extension. The truth of the other substance, Thought, cannot be proved to be true. So according to his own principles, Descartes could not prove the existence of his own thinking self or of God, if he had not postulated them as first principles. Consequently, as Willey observes,

In this way Cartesian thought reinforced the growing disposition to accept the scientific world picture as the only "true" one. The criterion of truth which is set up, according to which the only real properties of objects were mathematical properties, implied a deprecation of all kinds of knowing other than that of the "philosopher." And as both religion and poetry spring from quite other modes of knowing, the Cartesian spirit in so far as it prevailed, was really hostile to them both.¹⁰

Descartes's dualism perfected the dichotomy between body and soul, and for the humanist, between flesh and spirit, emotions and thought, sense and intellect. But he did more. In decisively severing philosophy from theology, reason from faith, science from

10 Ibid., 87.

religion, he stated that one could have objective certitude about "philosophy" and science only. Subjective certitude gained by intuition was the only guarantee, according to his tenets, for the truth of theology, faith, and religion. These tenets led to the rationalism and eventual scepticism of later philosophers. Another word from the greatest living neo-scholastic about the effects of the dichotomy of Descartes should epitomize our discussion of that great divider.

The Cartesian angel has aged a good deal; he has moulted many times; he is weary. But his undertaking has prospered prodigiously; it has become world-wide, and it holds us under a law which is not gentle. He is an obstinate divider and he has set all things against each other - faith and reason, metaphysics and science, knowledge and love.¹¹

In the first chapter we examined St. Thomas's simple, yet profound solution to the problem ever confronting the artist: the reconciling of the claims of flesh and spirit. St. Thomas shows that beauty is perceived through the cooperation of the senses and the intellect. Consequently, a poet gives expression to his personal perception of the beauty in a way which reconciles the claims of both flesh and spirit.

Descartes's dichotomy ruined this reconciliation; flesh and spirit are hopelessly divided; the things of sense have no connection with those of the intellect because they belong to two

11 Jacques Maritain, Three Reformers, London, 1928, 89.

different and distinct substances. The philosophy which Descartes gave to the modern world and the aesthetic which he consequently gave to poetry is one of the chief contributing causes to the lack of great English poetry since the advent of Cartesianism. Descartes had removed the foundation necessary to all great poetic expression: the union of senses and intellect, of emotion and thought, of flesh and spirit, of body and soul.

CHAPTER IV

UNIFIED AND DISSOCIATED SENSIBILITY

Unified sensibility is a term which was introduced into the criticism of metaphysical poetry by T. S. Eliot. He used the term to express the distinctive quality of the poetry of the metaphysical poets (and the essential quality of all truly great poetry). The occasion of his essay on metaphysical poetry in which Eliot first used the term was the publication of Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century, a collection edited by Herbert J. C. Grierson. Grierson was the greatest contemporary authority on metaphysical poetry, and, as Eliot remarks in the essay, "Mr. Grierson's book is in itself a piece of criticism and a provocation of criticism."¹ Eliot in his essay does not properly define these terms; we can only deduce his meaning (which meaning is, at times, obscure) from his use of the terms in context. So, from Grierson's and Willey's use of these same terms in context we can heighten our knowledge of the full connotations which the terms carry. In defining these terms, therefore, Willey's and

¹ T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Selected Essays, New York, 1932, 241.

Grierson's, no less than Eliot's, interpretations of the terms will be consulted because Willey and Grierson are no less qualified to give such interpretations.

The term unified sensibility is used with two connotations by these critics. However, the second connotation really presupposes the first, so there is nothing disjunctive about them.

Basil Willey gives us the first connotation attached to the term unified sensibility. It will be necessary here to give a lengthy quotation from Willey to capture the full content of unified sensibility in its first connotation. Willey is using the term in this context in his evaluation of Sir Thomas Browne:

He (Sir Thomas Browne) had, in fact, what Mr. T. S. Eliot has called the "unified sensibility" of the metaphysicals, which was the offspring - perhaps unreplicable in different circumstances - of a scholastic training blended with the expansive curiosity of the Renaissance. It meant the capacity to live in divided and distinguished worlds, and to pass freely to and fro between one and another. . . . Many different worlds or countries of the mind then lay close together - the worlds of scholastic learning, the worlds of scientific experiment, the worlds of classical mythology and of Biblical history, of fable and of fact, of theology and demonology, of sacred and profane love, of pagan and Christian morals, of activity and contemplation; and a cultivated man had the freedom of them all. They were divided and distinguished perhaps, but not as later, by such high barriers that a man was shut up for life in one and another of them. The distinctions were only beginning to be made which for later ages shut off poetry from science, metaphor from fact, fancy from judgment. The point about these different worlds was not that they were divided, but that they were simultaneously available. The major interests of life had not yet been mechanically apportioned to specialists, so that one must dedicate oneself wholly to fact or wholly to value.

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I think that something of the peculiar quality of the "metaphysical" mind is due to this fact of its not being finally committed to any one world. Instead, it could hold them all in a loose synthesis together, yielding itself, as only a mind in free poise can, to the passion of detecting analogies and correspondences between them. . . . The "divided worlds" are so equipollent that they are almost interchangeable. While Browne is writing as a Christian, his experience as a scholar is also available to him; while writing as an archeologist, his experience as a mystic is available; as a naturalist, his experience as poet, scholar, or seer.²

Unified sensibility in its first connotation, therefore, is the capacity of a poet to unite the fruits of his experiences into new wholes. The fruits of these experiences are the truths of human life garnered from those personal experiences. Thus a poet who has unified sensibility in this first sense can unite what he knows from Catholic revelation with the truths of atomic science; his musical experience of Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto he can link with his experience of the delicate luffing of a spinnaker running before the soft sunset breezes of Lake Michigan; he can unite his experiences of the drunken ravings of the derelicts along Chicago's West Madison Street with his awed experience of the Trappist monks singing the praises of God at two in the morning in the hills of Kentucky. Life is the poet's province, and if he possesses unified sensibility in this first sense, he is capable of uniting the various truths of human experience into new wholes.

Unified sensibility in its second sense means the capa-

2 Willey, Seventeenth Century Background, 42, 43-44.

city of a poet, in Eliot's phrase, "to feel his thought." This succinct phrase touches the idea adequately, but needs ample explanation. Before such explanation is proffered, it must again be remembered that unified sensibility in its second sense presupposes the first connotation of the term. Necessarily, before a poet may "feel his thought," he must have a "thought," a "truth," presented to his intellect which he may "feel." And, this "thought" is the result of unified sensibility in its first sense. It is the amalgamation into a new whole of the various truths which are the fruits of the poet's personal experiences in life.

Since the explanation of the second connotation of unified sensibility is complicated, the clarity of the explanation will be facilitated, if the two-fold function of the poet in producing poetry is first briefly outlined.

A poet must first perceive beauty and a corresponding emotion must be aroused in him; he then must express this emotional experience in order to produce poetry. The experiencing of an emotion and the expressing of the emotional experiences is the two-fold function a poet must fulfill in producing poetry. Similarly, there are two interpretations of unified sensibility in this second connotation of "feeling a thought." Each interpretation is necessary since each interpretation corresponds to one part of this two-fold function a poet must fulfill.

We must further analyze the psychological process, the result of which is the arousing of an emotion in the poet. The poet's intellect perceives with profound clarity the "thought," i.e., the "truth" of something which is presented to his intellect through the agency of his senses. And when the poet's intellect perceives that the object is not only "true," but also "good," (The moment the intellect perceives the object not only as "true" but also as "good," the will automatically desires the object). his intellect also perceives or intuits the object as "beautiful." For, as St. Thomas says, beauty and the good in an object are identical. And at the moment that the mind perceives the "beautiful" in the object, a corresponding emotion is aroused in the poet. The poet, therefore, must not only perceive the "truth" of the object, he must see the "truth" as "beautiful" before an emotion can be aroused. Oftentimes a "truth" is perceived, but it is not perceived as "beautiful," and therefore no emotion is aroused. But the poet must have the perspicacity to see the "truth" as "beautiful" in order that a corresponding emotion be aroused.

Furthermore, this emotion is in perfect proportion to the poet's conception of the "truth" of the object perceived. It cannot be otherwise since, in the object, the "true," the "good," and the "beautiful" are the same. And this subjective emotional reaction is automatic; it is a one to one correspondence with the subjective conception of the "true," and therefore the "beauti-

ful" in the object perceived. Consequently, if the "truth" be a light "truth" such as that perceived on hearing a Strauss waltz, there will be a corresponding light emotion in perfect proportion to the "truth" and "beauty" intuited in hearing the waltz. But if it be a profound "truth" such as that perceived on hearing Brahms's First Symphony, the emotion produced or educed will be proportionately profound. However, for a proportionate emotion to be aroused which corresponds perfectly with the subjective "truth," i.e., the poet's conception of the "truth" and "beauty" of the object perceived, the poet must be convinced of the "truth" of the object perceived. If the poet is not convinced of the "truth," there will be no corresponding emotion proportionate to the "truth" of the object perceived.

So the first function in the two-fold function which the poet fulfills in producing poetry has two phases: first, the poet must perceive the "beauty" in the "truth" to have an emotion aroused; secondly, the poet must be convinced of the "truth" perceived in order that the emotion aroused be proportionate to the "truth" and "beauty" perceived. But since a poet would not even begin to be a poet unless some emotion were aroused upon perceiving the "truth" and "beauty" of an object, the first phase is not regarded as unified sensibility in a poet. Consequently, it is with this second phase of the first function of a poet that "feeling a thought" in its first interpretation is concerned.

According to this interpretation "feeling a thought" means that the poet's emotion must be proportionate to the "truth" perceived. And, as has been shown, this emotion can only be proportionate to the "truth" perceived, if the poet is convinced of the "truth" of his "thought." If the poet is not convinced of the "truth" of his "thought," no corresponding emotion will ensue. Any emotion a poet may later express as being aroused from a "thought" the "truth" of which he is not convinced will be artificial. This is the first interpretation of "feeling a thought."

The second interpretation which deals with the poet's expression of the emotional experience will be taken next, but this second interpretation presupposes the first as much as expressing an emotional experience presupposes the emotional experience itself. Grierson uses "feeling a thought" according to both interpretations in the following quotation. In referring to St. Thomas and his Latin poetry, Grierson states: "Metaphysical in this large way, Donne and his followers to Cowley are not. . . . None of the poets has for his main theme a metaphysic like that (which) . . . St. Thomas passionately apprehended and imaginatively expounded."³ (Emphasis supplied.) The phrase "passionately apprehended" refers to "feeling a thought" in its first interpretation, and the phrase "imaginatively expounded" refers to "feeling

3 Herbert J. C. Grierson, "The Metaphysical Poets," The Background of English Literature, London, 1950, 116.

a thought" in its second interpretation.

Before proceeding to an explanation of "feeling a thought" in its second interpretation, we must reiterate that the first requirement in the two-fold function of the poet is that he be "true to himself." His poetry must be the expression of an emotional experience which he really received, and which emotion he received in proportion to his conception of the "truth" of the "thought" of the poem because he was convinced of that "truth." The emotion corresponds, in other words, to the subjective truth of the "thought," i.e., the "thought" as the poet conceived it. (By way of repetition, "thought" is the result of unified sensibility in its first connotation: it is, remotely, a complexus of objects presented to the intellect for apprehension; proximately, it is the complexus of truths which the intellect apprehends in these objects presented to it and which the intellect of a poet possessing unified sensibility in its first sense combines into a new integral whole to be presented to the intellect once more as the integral "thought" of the poem. The "truth" which the poet perceives in that integral "thought" is the basic "truth" of the poem underlying and uniting the integral parts of the "thought." Grierson gives examples of the various "thoughts" expressed in poetry:

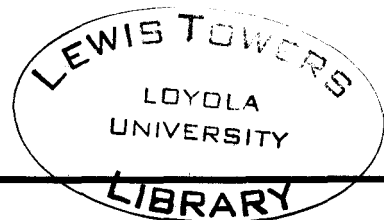
Its (poetry's) themes may be the simplest experiences of the surface of life, sorrow and joy, love and battle, the peace of the country, the bustle and stir of towns, but equally they may be the boldest conceptions, the profoundest

intuitions, the subtlest and most complex classifications and "discourse of reason," if into these too the poet can "carry sensation," make of them passionate experiences communicable in vivid and moving imagery, in rich and varied harmonies).⁴

The "thought" considered in itself apart from the poet's perception of it is objective truth; the "thought" as the poet conceives it is subjective truth, and it is of this subjective truth that a poet must be convinced in order to produce true poetry. It would be apropos to treat here by way of an example the relation of subjective truth and of objective truth to poetry.

Suppose the poet is Herbert and that he expresses an emotion which is aroused by his personal conviction of some truth of the Anglican Church. Such a truth is not objectively integral. Herbert still writes good poetry because he is true to his conception of objective truth, however limited that truth is. But, now suppose the poet is Crashaw and that he expresses an emotion which is aroused by his personal conviction of some truth of the Roman Catholic Church. Such a truth is objectively fully integral. In that respect, Crashaw is not a greater poet than Herbert because Herbert expresses an emotion which corresponds to the subjective truth as much as Crashaw's does. But the poetry which Crashaw produces is greater because the objective truth upon which it is founded is completely integral. This latter is the point which

⁴ Ibid., 115.



Eliot makes in his essay "Poetry and Propaganda:" "We can hardly doubt that the 'truest' philosophy is the best material for the greatest poet, so that the poet must be rated in the end both by the philosophy he realizes and by the fullness and adequacy of his realization."⁵ The connection between objective truth and unified sensibility in its first connotation should again be noted here.

Now that we have discussed the first interpretation of "feeling a thought" and the relation of subjective and objective truth to poetry, we will consider the second function in the two-fold function which a poet fulfills, and, in turn, the second interpretation of "feeling a thought."

The second function of the poet is to express the emotional experience which was aroused in him by his perception of the "beautiful" in a "truth" in such a way that the emotion is experienced by the reader. He does this through the medium of language and meter. The poet must reproduce the whole experience, i.e., the "thought" and the proportionate emotion aroused by the "thought." The language must express the thought from which the emotion was aroused. But it must do more than that: it must give the "thought" conveying its "truth," but emphasizing its "beauty." And it must do still more: the language (and the meter) must re-

5 T. S. Eliot, "Poetry and Propaganda," The Bookman, LXX, London, February, 1930.

arouse the emotion, and the emotion re-aroused must be proportionate to the "truth" which the language simultaneously expresses.

Remember that, according to St. Thomas, the mind (vis cogitativa) first intuited the "beauty" of the "thought" from which the emotion was aroused through the agency of the senses of seeing and hearing. Therefore, in recreating the "thought" so that the "beauty" of the "thought" is so emphasized that the corresponding emotion is aroused in the reader, the reader's senses of hearing and seeing must be recruited to recreate the "beauty" of the "thought." This "beauty" in the "thought" is recreated through the sense of hearing by the meter and the long and short vowels and the assonance, alliteration, and rhyme of the words; this "beauty" is, likewise recreated through the sense of sight by imaginative language, by images that are charged, images that not only give the "thought," the "truth," of the "thought," but of their very nature recall or re-arouse the same proportionate emotion in the reader which the poet experienced when he intuited the "beauty" in the "truth" of the "thought." These images are in the intellect but they are sense images. Therefore they are capable of re-arousing emotions, which reside partly in the intellect and partly in the sense faculties. These sense images, therefore, recreate the "beauty" of the "thought" by a double process: they recreate the "beauty" of the "thought" that first caused a proportionate emotion to be aroused, and, secondly, they

directly arouse emotions intimately associated with the images used.

The true poet chooses just such images as will reproduce emotions which are faithful to his own experience; he will choose images that give the "truth" he perceived, emphasize the "beauty" in the "thought" just as its "beauty" was emphasized in his own intuition, and that will re-arouse the same emotions which he experienced, emotions that were proportionate to the "truth" and "beauty" of the poet's "thought."

This process by which the poet recreates his "truth" and proportionate emotion, in short, his whole experience, by means of sense images, constitutes the second interpretation of "feeling a thought." This is the interpretation which T. S. Eliot attaches to the phrase when he says that "feeling a thought" is a "direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling."⁶ Putting his interpretation in different words, he says "feeling a thought" is "transmuting ideas into sensation, . . . (or) transforming an observation into a state of mind."⁷ For Eliot, the sense image must convey the whole "experience:" the "thought" perceived through the sense perception of an object, and the proportionate emotion aroused from the intuition of the "beauty

6 Eliot, "Metaphysical Poets," 246.

7 Ibid., 249.

ful" in the "thought."

Grierson uses the phrase according to its second interpretation when he says that "feeling a thought" is "above all the peculiar blend of passion and thought, feeling and ratiocination."⁸

To summarize: unified sensibility has two main connotations, the second connotation presupposing the first. Unified sensibility in its first connotation is the capacity of the poet to unite the truths which he has gathered from his multifarious personal experiences in life. This amalgamation of truths forms the "thought" of a poet's poetry.

Unified sensibility in its second connotation of "feeling a thought" has two interpretations, the second interpretation presupposing the first. According to the first interpretation, "feeling a thought" requires that a poet experience an emotion which is proportionate to the "beauty" of the "thought" he perceives. He can experience this proportionate emotion only if he is convinced of the "truth" of the "thought" whose "beauty he perceives.

In its second interpretation "feeling a thought" requires that a poet use just such sense images (along with other devices of language and meter) as recreate the "beauty" and "truth" of his "thought" in order that a proportionate emotion may be re-

8 Grierson, Background of English Literature, 118.

aroused.

Since unified sensibility has two main connotations and since this second connotation admits of two interpretations, the term, consequently, may be used with three different meanings. As a result, it may be true to say that a poet possesses unified sensibility in one sense, but lacks it in another sense. However, if we say that a poet possesses unified sensibility in the sense of "feeling a thought" according to its second interpretation, that poet fully possesses unified sensibility. This is true since when the term is used according to the meaning just indicated, the other two meanings attached to the term are included implicitly.

The term dissociated sensibility is the converse of unified sensibility. Indeed, to the extent that a poet lacks unified sensibility according to its full meaning just noted, he is said to have dissociated sensibility. Just as there are three degrees of unified sensibility according to the three ascending meanings of the term, so there are three degrees of dissociated sensibility according to three corresponding descending meanings. Since these three meanings of dissociated sensibility correspond respectively to the three meanings of unified sensibility, it will suffice to briefly point out these meanings.

In the descending scale of meaning, a poet has dissociated sensibility in the least dissociated sense of the term when he fails in the expression of his poetry to arouse an emotion which is proportionate to the "truth" of the "thought" expressed.

He fails to use the proper sense images which would not only give the "truth" of the "thought" and recreate the "beauty" of the "truth," but also would re-arouse the proportionate emotion. So it is a failure in expression.

If such a poet's images do create a "truth," but with a weak disproportionate emotion, we have an example of the didacticism of the Neo-classic poets. Much of Pope's poetry, such as the "Essay on Man," is dissociated in this respect. On the other hand, if the poet arouses an emotion but there is no "truth" or "thought" to support it as an adequate cause, then we have an example of the sentimentalism of the Romantic poets. Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud" is dissociated on this score.

T. S. Eliot equivalates the difference between a poet possessing and one lacking unified sensibility with the difference between "an intellectual poet and a reflective poet."⁹ In applying the latter epithet to Tennyson and Browning, Eliot continues: "Tennyson and Browning are poets and they think; but they do not feel their thoughts as immediately as the odor of a rose."¹⁰ He amplifies his meaning: "The more intelligent he (a poet) is the more likely that he will have interests: our only condition is that he turn them into poetry, and not merely meditate on them

9 Eliot, "Metaphysical Poets," 247.

10 Ibid.

poetically."¹¹ Using the term to characterize a whole new current in English literature, Eliot develops his notion of dissociated sensibility: "In the seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered."¹² One effect of this dissociation was that "while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude."¹³ Another effect was that early in the eighteenth century the sentimental age began when the "poets revolted against the ratiocinative, the descriptive; they thought and felt by fits, unbalanced; they reflected."¹⁴

Thus, dissociated sensibility in its first and least dissociated sense means the failure of the poet to use the proper sense images to recreate the "thought" ("truth" and "beautiful") of the poem, and to re-arouse the proportionate emotion.

As the first meaning of dissociated sensibility refers to something artificial in the expression of a poet, so the second meaning refers to something artificial in the experience itself. In this sense, dissociated sensibility means the failure of the "beauty" and "truth" of the "thought" to re-arouse a proportionate emotion in the poet because the poet is not convinced of the

11 Ibid., 248.

12 Ibid., 247.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., 248.

"truth" of the "thought." It is impossible for such a poet later to re-arouse through his expression an emotion which is proportionate to the "truth" of the "thought," since he himself never experienced such an emotion. Any emotion he may subsequently attempt to arouse through devices of expression will be at best an artificial emotion.

In its third meaning, dissociated sensibility is the inability of the poet to unite the truths he has learned from his various human experiences into new integral wholes. As Eliot states in a quotation given earlier in this chapter, the more integral the objective truth is upon which a poet bases his poetry, the greater will be his poetry. Dissociated sensibility here refers to the failure of the poet to integrate into new wholes the objective truths which go to make up the "thought" of his poetry.

As a poet may possess unified sensibility in three different degrees, so may he possess dissociated sensibility in three different corresponding degrees. However, a poet is most generally said to have dissociated sensibility according to its first and least "dissociated" meaning, just as he is most generally said to have unified sensibility according to the third and most "unified" sense of that term.

This concludes the exposition of the meanings of unified sensibility and dissociated sensibility.

CHAPTER V

THE INTER-RELATION OF UNIFIED SENSIBILITY AND THE MEDIEVAL SYNTHESIS; THE INTER-RELATION OF DISSOCIATED SENSIBILITY AND THE RENAISSANCE DICHOTOMY

A relation is as clear as the terms between which it exists are clear. Consequently, the clearer the terms are, the clearer the relation becomes. Following this principle, we have in the preceding chapters strived to unpack as adequately as possible the content in meaning of the terms unified sensibility and medieval synthesis and of their opposites: dissociated sensibility and Renaissance dichotomy. Since we have thoroughly examined and defined the terms, it will not be difficult to draw the relations which, it is the contention of this thesis, exist between unified sensibility and the medieval synthesis on the one hand, and dissociated sensibility and the Renaissance dichotomy on the other.

First, we will draw the relation between dissociated sensibility and the Renaissance dichotomy. Dissociated sensibility in its third meaning is the inability of the poet to combine the various truths of human existence which he has acquired into

new integral wholes. These wholes would form the objective truth upon which the "thought" of his poem would be based. If a poet adheres to the philosophies underlying the Renaissance dichotomy or anthropocentric humanism, this inability is easily explained.

Anthropocentric humanism which divorces the claims of this life from the claims of the next and which denies any essential connection between the temporal goals of man and his eternal goals effectively prohibits the poet from combining the truths of this life with eternal truths. It effectively divides the natural ends of man from his supernatural end, his natural happiness from his supernatural happiness.

Similarly, the underlying philosophies of anthropocentric humanism and the Renaissance dichotomy make it impossible for a poet to integrate truths into new wholes. Occam with his assertion that God cannot be known at all from reason and Bacon with his "two-fold truth" effected a decisive cleavage between the truths of philosophy and the truths of theology, of reason and of faith, of science and of religion. Descartes completed this dichotomy by dividing all reality into two Substances: Thought and Extension, thus denying any connection between material and spiritual truths. Consequently, the Renaissance dichotomy or anthropocentric humanism is directly related to the "inability of the poet to unite the various truths of human existence into new, integrated wholes."

In its second meaning, dissociated sensibility is the inability of the poet to experience an emotion proportionate to the "truth" of his "thought" because he is not convinced of the "truth" of that "thought."

The Renaissance dichotomy, or anthropocentric humanism, in embodying a philosophy which is the direct antithesis of the medieval synthesis, which alone combines natural with supernatural truth, is a false philosophy of life. As such, the Renaissance dichotomy contradicts the fundamental tenets regarding man's eternal destiny which involve the relation of his temporal to man's eternal end, and the tenets regarding the means of attaining that end which is the natural law, and its compendium: the Decalogue. In contradicting these fundamental tenets this dichotomy contradicts tenets which history proves that man of his very nature indorses and has indorsed--even before the Christian era.

Consequently, if the "thought" of a poet is based on tenets of the Renaissance dichotomy which contradict these fundamental tenets of the medieval synthesis, the poet cannot be convinced of the "truth" of his "thought." And if the poet is not convinced of the "truth" of his "thought," he will not have a proportionate emotional response. (It may happen that a poet's "thought" is based on some specific application of the Renaissance dichotomy rather than on one of its fundamental tenets. Even though such a ramification of the dichotomy is as false as the

fundamental tenets from which it is deduced, a poet can be subjectively convinced through invincible ignorance of the truth of such a ramification of the dichotomy and therefore of the "truth" of his "thought." So, even though a poet of his very nature as man cannot be ignorant of the fundamental tenets of the natural law (which the dichotomy contradicts), it is very possible that he be invincibly ignorant of certain specific ramifications of the natural law because of the darkness of intellect which original sin brought about. And so, in so far as the poet is convinced of the "truth" of such a "thought," he is capable of receiving a proportionate emotional response. Although subjectively sound, objectively, the "truth" which produces this particular proportionate emotional response is unsound; consequently, in the ultimate analysis, the poet's expression of such an experience will lack that universality born of objective truth which the greatest poetry must possess.)

Since the greatest poetry deals with these great fundamental tenets of the lex naturalis, the dearth of great English poetry since the Renaissance dichotomy set in may be explained thus: that a poet in the Cartesian tradition may fail to receive a proportionate emotional response to his "thought," because he cannot be convinced of its "truth," in as much as that "truth" contradicts fundamental tenets of the medieval synthesis. However that may be the relation is definite between the Renaissance di-

chotomy or anthropocentric humanism and the "inability of the poet to have a proportionate emotional response to a 'truth' because he is not convinced of that 'truth.'"

Dissociated sensibility in its first and least "dissociated" connotation is the failure of the poet to recreate the "beauty" of the "thought" and to re-arouse the proportionate emotion through the co-operation of the senses and the intellect. The sense images used in the poem recruit both the intellect and the senses of the reader in recreating the "beauty" of the "thought" so as to arouse in the reader the proportionate emotion. The sense images can also directly re-arouse the proportionate emotion through the use of sense images that arouse emotions associated with those images. In this whole process, we see the close co-operation required between the sense faculties and the intellect in the production of a poem.

The basic philosophy of the Renaissance dichotomy makes such co-operation impossible. For Cartesianism completely severs Body from Soul, the senses from the intellect, the emotions from thought, flesh from spirit. By-passing the impossibility, according to Cartesian principles, of intuiting "beauty" in the intellect through the agency of the senses, and of that "beauty" arousing an emotion (which emotion of its very nature must reside simultaneously in the intellect and in the sense faculties, Cartesianism would make it impossible for the poet effectively to use

sense images to produce poetry.

According to the dichotomy of Descartes, it would be impossible for sense images to recreate an intuition of "beauty," requiring the co-operation of the reader's intellect and sense faculties. Likewise, would it be impossible for these sense images to re-arouse a proportionate emotion, since the emotion resides simultaneously in the intellect and in the senses - something which Descartes would have to deny according to his tenets. It is in this way that dissociated sensibility in its most general connotation is related to the Renaissance dichotomy. But it is related to anthropocentric humanism under a different aspect.

According to this humanism, man in the sixteenth century Renaissance, made use of his intellectual and sense powers for his happiness in this world in a pagan manner, independently of the laws of God. With the concupiscences acquired through original sin paving the way, sinful excesses in the use of the sense powers, and in satisfying sense appetites, not only became widespread in Renaissance Europe, but were being justified in the name of "humanism." In England this brought on a violent Puritan reaction in the Anglican Church which veered to the other extreme of apostrophizing as evil the senses and their operations. Michael F. Moloney states that it was because of the "infiltration of the Puritan ideology through which men had come to suspect the

senses and the emotions - or at least nauseatingly aware of them"¹ that the poets diminished their use of sense images in poetry and began using the intellectual conceits that were, in the last analysis, powerless either to re-create the "beauty" Maritain calls "connatural to man" or to re-arouse a proportionate emotion. The desiccated poetry, or rather, didacticism of the Neo-classic poets is evidence to the point. Again, dissociated sensibility in its third connotation is directly related to anthropocentric humanism in one of its chief reverse effects on literature and poetry, i.e., artistic puritanism.

Now that the relation of dissociated sensibility and the Renaissance dichotomy or anthropocentric humanism has been established, we will explain the converse relation between unified sensibility and the medieval synthesis or theocentric humanism.

According to its first meaning, unified sensibility is the capacity of the poet to unite into new wholes the various truths of human existence he has acquired. Theocentric humanism states that the pursuits and claims of this life have a definite connection with the pursuit and claims of the next life. In fact, all temporal ends are ordered to our Last End, God. Theocentric humanism places an essential connection between man's temporal and eternal happiness; the one is proximate, the other is ulti-

1 Moloney, John Donne, 202.

mate. Thus theocentric humanism enables the poet to combine natural and supernatural truths into new, integral wholes.

Theocentric humanism is humanism based on the medieval synthesis. Any poet who adheres to this synthesis is capable of combining all truths because in this synthesis all truths which are really truths are reconcilable and in harmony with one another. The medieval synthesis unites natural truths with supernatural truths, the truths of philosophy with the truths of theology, the truths of reason with the truths of faith, the truths of science with the truths of religion. As St. Thomas says, "truth" is "one," and no truth can contradict another truth as Bacon would infer. It is in this way that the medieval synthesis alone enables the poet to have completely unified sensibility according to its first connotation. And it is in this way that the unified sensibility in this first connotation is related to the medieval synthesis or theocentric humanism.

Unified sensibility in its second sense is the ability of the poet to experience an emotion proportionate to the "truth" of the "thought" because he is convinced of the "truth." The medieval synthesis, again, contains all truth, natural and supernatural, in an integral whole. So, if the "truth" of his poem is based on the medieval synthesis, he can be convinced of the "truth," and, consequently, he is able to experience an emotion proportionate to that "truth."

Unified sensibility in this sense also requires that the "truth" which the intellect perceives and the poet is convinced to be identified with the "beauty" which arouses the proportionate emotion in the intellect and sense faculties. In the medieval synthesis, St. Thomas shows that this identification is possible. He proves that "truth" is identified with "good" and that "good" is identified with "beauty." The relation of unified sensibility in its second sense to the medieval synthesis or theocentric humanism should be clear.

Unified sensibility in its third and most "unified" sense is the ability of the poet to use just such proper sense images as will recreate the "beauty" of the "thought" and will re-arouse an emotion in the reader proportionate to the "truth" of the poem.

This meaning of unified sensibility implies an experience in which the poet intuited "beauty" through the agency of his intellect and sense faculties and in which an emotional reaction proportionate to that "beauty" occurred in the intellect and sense faculties. This experience is presupposed; the poet, according to this third meaning of unified sensibility, through the use of proper sense images (and other devices of language and meter) must now recreate the "beauty" of the "thought" by appealing to the intellect and sense faculties of the reader through the sense images. This "beauty" must be so re-created that a propor-

tionate emotion be re-aroused in the intellect and sense faculties of the reader. The sense images can also re-arouse the proportionate emotion in the reader through the arousing of emotions intimately associated with those sense images. This is the full ability required of a poet who possesses unified sensibility. The close co-operation of the intellect and sense faculties in performing single functions is obvious: together they perceive the "beauty" of the thought; it is through and in them that the emotion is aroused; the sense images used to recreate the "beauty" and to re-arouse the proportionate emotion call both the intellect and sense faculties into play. (We have at the cost of repetition reviewed the implications contained in this third meaning of unified sensibility, with special emphasis on the co-functioning of the intellect and senses, in order that its relation to the medieval synthesis may be more lucidly perceived.)

In the first chapter we saw how St. Thomas has emphasized this co-operation of the intellect and sense faculties in the perception and enjoyment of the "beautiful." In fitting this tract on beauty into his synthesis, he has reconciled the claims of flesh and spirit, emotions and thought, senses and intellect, Body and Soul. St. Thomas provided the keystone that makes great poetry possible; Descartes removed that keystone, and as a result, the quality of English poetry since his time, has greatly suffered.

For St. Thomas the body and its senses are good because

they co-operate with the intellect not only in perceiving the beautiful, but in perceiving all truth. He set the happy medium for the use of the sense powers between the sense-excess of the pagan Renaissance and the sense-oppression of artistic Puritanism; the senses, for St. Thomas, are good if they hold their place designated by the natural law. In fact, far from denying the senses as keeping us from God as the Puritans implied, the medieval synthesis held that the senses, in perceiving created beauty lead the mind to God, since created beauty is but a reflection of the Divine Beauty.

Such is the point which Maritain makes in referring to the intuition of "beauty" by the intellect and sense faculties: "They especially perceive and particularly relish the beauty of things, who, like St. Francis of Assisi, for example, know that they emanate from a mind, and refer them to their Author."² For, closely associated with the medieval synthesis is what Ralph Adams Cramm calls the "sacramental ideal." So far were the adherents of the medieval synthesis from oppressing the sense faculties, that they recognized that through the agency of the senses they could perceive created beauty as a reflection of the Divine Beauty and that such perceptions could lead them to a knowledge of God. For the "sacramental ideal" "sought to find in created

2 Maritain, Art and Scholasticism, 25.

beauty the outward sign of an inward and indwelling grace."³

Cramm himself develops the notion of the "sacramental ideal:"

This beauty - of form, line, color, chiaroscuro, tone, melody, harmony, rhythm - has been desirable in itself, and because of its power of sensuous delight, but even more as a means of expressing symbolically, and therefore sacramentally, those spiritual adventures, experiences, and achievements which transcend the sphere of the physical and the intellectual, and therefore can be expressed only after a symbolical or sacramental fashion.⁴

Maloney ties in the "sacramental ideal" with the medieval synthesis:

In the light of the sacramental idealism, the created beauty of the universe with all its manifold appeal to the sense of man is a faint and shadowy reflection of the Divine Beauty which is its source. Thus the medieval aesthetic did not attempt to reject nature - it sought to supernaturalize it.⁵

Unified sensibility in its third and fullest meaning requires the close co-operation of Body and Soul, of the senses and the intellect, of the emotions and thought, and what for the poet is the reconciliation of flesh and spirit. We have gone into detail to show how fully the medieval synthesis and its tenets on beauty and its ramification in the sacramental ideal has recon-

3 Moloney, John Donne, 87.

4 Ralph Adams Cramm, The Substance of the Gothic, Boston, 1917, 8-9.

5 Moloney, John Donne, 211.

ciled the claims of flesh and spirit and of intellect and sense. We believe the relation between unified sensibility in this fullest sense connoting the "ability of the poet to use just such proper sense images as will re-create the 'beauty' of the 'thought' and re-arouse a proportionate emotion in the reader" and the medieval synthesis or theocentric humanism to be solidly founded, and now, at length, adequately demonstrated.

We believe that the conclusions which this thesis set out to prove are now firmly established and that the primary purpose of the thesis has thus been fulfilled. It remains for us in the final chapter to observe how these conclusions are borne out and exemplified in the poetry of two contemporary poets of the seventeenth century, John Donne and Richard Crashaw.

CHAPTER VI

THE TWO RELATIONS IN THE POETRY OF DONNE AND CRASHAW

In this chapter, a selection from the poetry of Richard Crashaw will be used to exemplify the relation of unified sensibility to the medieval synthesis, while a selection from the poetry of John Donne will be used to exemplify the relation of dissociated sensibility to the Renaissance dichotomy.

These poets were contemporaries and both belong to the group of poets called metaphysical poets. Selections from their poetry, consequently, are most apt for demonstrating the two relations. We must remember that, at times, Donne possessed unified sensibility in a limited sense in his poetry, and that at times Crashaw lacked unified sensibility in the full sense in his poetry. But this chapter is not attempting a critical analysis of the poetic achievement of either Donne or Crashaw; it will merely demonstrate the two relations established in the thesis as they are found in poetry. To do this, we have chosen a selection from each poet that reflects his attitude towards a fundamental "truth" in human experience, namely, death.

The selection from Donne which we have chosen to exemplify the relation of dissociated sensibility to the Renaissance dichotomy is his Holy Sonnet, "Death Be Not Proud."

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, Kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.¹

Let us analyze the poem briefly: First, what "thought" is expressed in the poem? The poem states that death is not to be feared because through it man finds rest; it is a "short sleep" after which men "wake eternally."

Now, what would be the proportionate emotion that such a "thought" would naturally arouse? The natural emotional reaction to such a "thought" would be one of self-confidence in meeting death, or, perhaps, one of contempt for death. But there is nothing in the poem to evoke such an emotion - the "beauty" is not recreated effectively through sense images and other poetic

¹ John Donne, The Poems of John Donne, ed., Herbert J. C. Grierson, London, 1933, 297.

devices so that a proportionate emotion is re-aroused. For this reason the poem suffers from a dissociated sensibility. Before proving that the poem is the result of dissociated sensibility in the poet, and indicating the causes of the dissociated sensibility, we would like to give a critical opinion agreeing that Donne's religious poetry was of an inferior quality:

But such a spirit will not easily produce great devotional poetry. There are qualities in the religious poetry of simple and purer souls to which Donne seldom or never attains. The natural love of God which overflows the pages of the great mystics which dilates the heart and verses of a poet like the Dutchman Vondel, the ardour and tenderness of Crashaw, the chaste pure piety and penitence of Herbert, the love from which devotion and ascetic self-denial come unbidden - to these Donne never attained. The high and passionate joy of The Anniversary is not heard in his sonnets or hymns.²

In the sonnet "death Be Not Proud" Donne has not effectively used his two characteristic tools which he uses in producing his best poems: his dialectic, which is the expression of a proof supporting the main "truth" which the poem enunciates; and the conceit, which is really an extended metaphor, but which Donne could condense effectively at times to convey his "thought" and to stimulate the emotion.

In the sonnet in question, Donne's dialectic is weak and unforceful. The "truth" which he states is that death is not to be feared. But the reasons he educes in his dialectic do not

2 John Donne, The Poems of John Donne, II, ed., Herbert J. C. Grierson, Oxford, 1912, 11.

support this truth. The reason Donne gives for not fearing death is that death brings the same rest as sleep does. And after that "short sleep" is over, what? The "soul's delivery" as we "wake eternally" is Donne's reply.

The dialectic is weak because it suffers from an ignoratio elenchi. Man does not fear death, he fears what follows upon death. Connatural with man is a universal belief that after death he will receive a reward or a punishment for the actions of this life. Man fears death because he is not certain whether death will find him ready for reward or punishment. It follows that the dialectic which would rationally fortify the "truth" that death is not to be feared is that the individual is worthy of reward and not punishment after death.

The poem eludes this point and merely compares death with sleep. It fails to take into account a consideration essential to the dialectic of such a poem: After death, when man "wakes eternally," will the "soul's delivery" be to the hell of eternal punishment or to the heaven of eternal reward for the actions of this life? The dialectic, in leaving this question unanswered, fails. Because the dialectic is unconvincing, the "truth" expressed is unconvincing. In proposing an unfounded "truth" in the poem, Donne makes it impossible for the reader to experience a proportionate emotion because the "truth" as expressed is unconvincing. As we have said, unless a person is

convinced of a "truth," he cannot rejoice in its "beauty" since "truth" and "beauty" are "one."

In this poem, Donne also fails to use his second characteristic tool effectively, the conceit. The conceit was Donne's sense-image; it was his chief means of conveying his total experience to the reader and of re-arousing the proportionate emotion. Donne relied heavily on the conceit to express the "truth" of the "thought" figuratively, (often the conceit also embodies the dialectic of the poem) to recreate the "beauty" of the "thought," and to re-arouse the proportionate emotion. And this use of the conceit achieved the desired result in his best secular poems. But he fails here, either to express the "truth," to recreate the "beauty," or to re-arouse the proportionate emotion through conceits (or any other sense-images).

The one conceit he does use is that of "sleep" with "death" as its minor term. This conceit is ineffective for two reasons: First, it does not truly represent the minor term because there is nothing essentially common between sleep and death: sleep is unconscious rest; death is a very conscious particular judgment committing an individual soul either to heavenly happiness or hellish torment forever. Thus, this conceit does not express "truth" or recreate "beauty." It cannot. Secondly, as a sense-image, sleep, as it is conceived poetically here, is trite and unarresting to the imagination, and thus powerless in itself

to re-arouse an emotion. The conceit is as vapid as the truth upon which it rests.

So the sonnet fails because it is the product of a dissociated sensibility in its first and least "dissociated" sense: "the inability of the poet to use just such proper sense-images as will express the 'truth' and recreate the 'beauty' of the 'thought' and thus re-arouse a proportionate emotion in the reader." No sense-images were used which produce a proportionate emotion.

We saw that the weak dialectic indicated that the "truth" of the "thought," which "truth" embodied the "beauty" of the poem, was unfounded. Thus no proportionate emotion could have been re-aroused through sense-images because there was no "truth" or "beauty" in the "thought" of the sonnet as an adequate cause for such an emotion. We are of the opinion that the poem suffers from a dissociated sensibility in its first sense because it is a result of dissociated sensibility in its second and third meanings. We further assert that Donne had dissociated sensibility in its second and third meanings because he was a disciple of anthropocentric humanism and the Renaissance dichotomy. We will support these assertions in order by first returning to the dialectic of the poem.

We believe that Donne uncharacteristically used a weak dialectic which is not convincing because he himself was uncon-

vinced of the "truth" of his "thought." We believe, and our belief is confirmed by his biography and critical authorities, that his real attitude toward death is one of fear. We believe the illogical braggadocio with which Donne taunts death is an effort on the poet's part to twist out an emotion of confidence and courage in the face of death, even though within himself he knows there is no rational foundation for him to feel such confidence. He avoids supporting the "truth" with the proper dialectic because he knows that according to that dialectic he may well be accounted worthy of eternal punishment - which is anything but sleep. And if he were so accounted, he would have eternal reasons for fearing death.

A glimpse into his personal life will give us the reasons why he feared death; it will also give us the reason why he possessed dissociated sensibility in its second sense of the inability of the poet to experience an emotion proportionate to the "beauty" of the "thought" because he is not convinced of the "truth" of the "thought" of his poem. Lastly, it will give us the reason why he could not be convinced of the "truth" of his poem: this reason is that he had dissociated sensibility in its third sense of the inability of the poet to unite the various truths of human experience into new integral wholes. The chief element in his personal life which gives us these supporting reasons is his adherence to anthropocentric humanism and the

Renaissance dichotomy. In the preceding chapter we established the relation between dissociated sensibility and the Renaissance dichotomy or anthropocentric humanism. We should notice how Donne's adherence to the latter gives rise to the dissociated sensibility reflected in "Death Be Not Proud."

John Donne was definitely a disciple of anthropocentric humanism. In his prime of life, he dedicated himself to seeking the joys, pleasures, and ambitions of this life. Edmund Gosse verifies this statement:

The piety of admirers has slurred over, but has not been able to erase, the fact that at this period (circa 1596) Donne was a type of the Renaissance young man, avid for pleasure and for knowledge and experience which were his highest expressions of pleasure; in a high degree he must have been a law unto himself. His conscience was entirely emancipated; his religious sense was occupied exclusively with the scholastic skeleton of dogma. Above all, in his intense instinctive curiosity, he had proclaimed himself cynically polygamous.³

Donne not only indulged in the sinful, this-world sense pleasures of anthropocentric humanism, he followed the this-world ambitions of that humanism to such an extent that he gave up his Catholic faith, when adherence to that faith in England would have thwarted the fulfillment of such ambitions. Moloney describes the environment which led to Donne's apostasy: "He was thrown precipitately into the company of poets, artists, scholars, and lawyers who

³ Edmund Gosse, The Life and Letters of John Donne, I, London, 1899, 67.

marched in the van of the Elizabethan splendor. . . . To Donne, ambitious in the two fields of letters and the law, it was evident that for him there could be no golden future while he remained in the Roman Catholic fold."⁴

Donne became a devotee of anthropocentric humanism; Donne rejected the Catholic faith and pledged a lasting, though lastingly insecure, allegiance to Anglicanism. This double allegiance of Donne to anthropocentric humanism and to Anglicanism meant in his case that he was a poet who was incapable of combining all the truths of human experience into new integral wholes. As an anthropocentric humanist, he could not reconcile the ambitions, the pleasures, and the goals of this life with the claims of the next life. For his temporal ends were discordant with eternal ends. When allegiance to the Catholic faith prevented the fulfillment of temporal ambitions, he rejected his faith and allied himself to Anglicanism. We say that he allied himself with Anglicanism rather than that he adopted, because he never seems to be convinced that he is in the true faith; indeed, he seems to long for Catholicism, his birth-right to eternity, if only it were compatible with his temporal ambitions. Gosse says that in the early editions of Donne's Holy Sonnets some of the poems were omitted,

because of the leaning which they betrayed to certain

Romish doctrines. In this they offer us a remarkable contribution to our knowledge of the inner mind of Donne. They seem to prove that even after the death of his wife, and his subsequent conversion, he hankered after some tenets of the Roman faith, or at least that he still doubted as to his attitude with regard to them.⁵

Consequently whenever Donne's poetry focuses on a subject such as death that touches on the relation of this life to the next life, the dichotomy between temporal and eternal ends enters in. When Donne could not reconcile the claims of his faith with his temporal ambitions and with anthropocentric humanism, he rejected his faith, and the dichotomy for him was complete. The basic insecurity which Donne always felt after his rejection of Catholicism is what J. B. Leishman ascribes as the cause of the ominous obsession death had with Donne:

But that mood of perfect joy and security which seems to have become almost habitual with certain practitioners of the religious life is rarely attained by Donne. Almost every one of those sonnets (Divine Poems) is the record of a spiritual conflict against that "sinne of feare." . . . His restless intellect, forever re-examining and leading him to doubt the premises which his faith (Anglicanism) had accepted, hinders that complete self-surrender and perfect union with Christ for which he longs. . . . Donne's religious poetry is, as I have said, intensely personal. His "sinne of feare" was partly due to his perpetual consciousness of the errors of his younger days.

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Over and over again in his sermons we find Donne imagining to himself all the horrors of death and of the grave and of what lost souls may have to endure after death; resolutely facing and grappling with them, and trying

⁵ Gosse, Life and Letters of Donne, II, 109-110.

to rid himself of that
 Sinne of feare, that when I have spunne
 My last thred, I shall perish on the shore.⁶

Donne had rejected his faith, and was unconvinced that his allegiance to Anglicanism would absolve the sins of his youth or insure his final salvation. . . . "Death be not proud!". . .??

We see how incapable Donne was of reconciling his temporal goals with his eternal end and was thus incapable of uniting such truths involving both time and eternity into an integral whole. Contrary to what he expresses in his sonnet, death could be proud and Donne should fear death because he failed to reconcile his temporal and eternal goals.

Likewise, the weak dialectic of the poem and the critical estimates given in quotation prove that he was not convinced of the "truth" expressed in his poem. Contrary to what he says in the poem, he knows that death can be proud. He knows that he has good reason to fear death because of his adherence to the Renaissance dichotomy which caused him to reject Catholicism and the medieval synthesis which were for him the one rock upon which he could build a secure confidence in facing death and its consequences. In rejecting Catholicism, Donne began a life of doubt which ended only in the grave. Grierson comments are ad rem:

Alike in his poetry and in his soberest prose, treatise,

⁶ J. B. Leishman, The Metaphysical Poets, Oxford, 1934, 88-89, 75.

or sermon, Donne's mind seems to want the high seriousness which comes from a conviction that truth is, and is to be found. A spirit of scepticism and paradox plays through and disturbs almost everything he wrote, except at moments when an intense mood of feeling, whether love or devotion, begets faith, and silences the sceptical and destructive wit by the power of vision rather than of intellectual conviction. Poles apart as these two poets seem at first glance to lie in feeling and in art, there is yet something of Tennyson in the conflict which wages perpetually in Donne's poetry between feeling and intellect.⁷

Because he was unconvinced in his own case of the truth that death was not to be feared, Donne could not experience a proportionate emotion. The emotion he tries unsuccessfully to convey is artificial. The poem is a case in point of what Grierson calls "the conflict between feeling and intellect" in Donne's poetry. Thus the sonnet results from dissociated sensibility in its second meaning.

We have already examined the poem and found that it suffers from dissociated sensibility in its first meaning. We also noted that Donne could not use the proper sense-images to reproduce the total experience in recreating the "truth" and "beauty" of the "thought" and in re-arousing a proportionate emotion, if he had dissociated sensibility in its second and third meanings. In establishing that in the production of this poem Donne had dissociated sensibility in the latter two meanings, we necessarily established that he had dissociated sensibility

7 Donne, Poems of Donne II, ed., Grierson, x.

in its first meaning: if the experience was defective, the expression of that experience must also be defective.

But even when Donne is at his best and is using his characteristic images in his secular poems to reproduce his experience, we find that he does not possess unified sensibility in its complete meaning of using sense-images to communicate accurately the experience. In many of these secular poems, in attempting to recreate the "beauty" of the "thought," Donne does not use sense-images, but intellectual-images. Such images hardly answer to "the direct sensuous apprehension of the thought" which Eliot requires of a poet possessing unified sensibility in its full sense. This may be the reason why such poems re-arouse an emotion only through effort and why they approach in quality the didacticism and rationalistic strain of the Neo-classic poets of the eighteenth century. J. B. Leishman's remarks are to the point here:

When Donne uses images and comparisons - and, as we have seen, he often dispenses with them altogether - they are very often intellectual rather than sensuous or pictorial. Instead of drawing them from the sights and sounds of the world around him, he draws them from philosophy or theology or science. Other poets, when they wish to communicate a certain mood or feeling, often refer to some sight or sound with which in the mind of the reader, the mood or feeling they desire to communicate may be supposed to be connected.⁸

With Moloney we believe that this transition in Donne's

⁸ Leishman, The Metaphysical Poets, 31.

poetry from the use of sense imagery to the use of intellectual imagery is a result of the artistic Puritanism that ruthlessly rebelled against the over-sensuousness of anthropocentric humanism and regarded all things sensory as impure, tainted with evil. Moloney concludes that

the essence of the Donne manner, born as it was of the conflict which filled his life, was the rejection of the medieval synthesis of flesh and spirit, of sensuous image and intellectual concept, which resulted, after a brief debauch of the senses, in a consistent diminution of the role of the senses and the emotions which they feed as co-partners in the work of poetic creation, with a synchronous overstressing of the importance of the intellectual processes.⁹

Moloney states that Donne's "~~diminution~~ of the role of the senses and emotions in the role of poetic creation" happened, "not because of a super-intellectualism which scorns the poet's normal materials and methods, but because of a diseased and distorted aesthetic perspective to which all things corporeal took on the aspect of evil."¹⁰ Moloney, I believe, summarizes concisely the relation of dissociated sensibility in its first meaning to the chief reverse effect of anthropocentric humanism as it appeared in the poetry of Donne. Donne's images ceased to embody that synthesis of flesh and spirit and became intellectual-images because of his rejection of the medieval synthesis and his alleg-

9 Moloney, John Donne, 203.

10 Ibid.

iance to anthropocentric humanism and the artistic Puritanism which was the former's chief influence on subsequent art. A very apt quotation from Moloney will serve to bring our treatment of Donne to a close:

Only two ~~decades~~ separated Descartes and Donne, and the division which Descartes rationalized - it was a division not only of faith and reason, of metaphysics and science, of knowledge and love, but what is particularly important for the artist, of flesh and spirit, of body and soul - Donne achieved in the instinctive manner of the poet. The synthesis of the natural and the supernatural which came so easily to a Dante and a Francis of Assisi was not possible for Donne.¹¹

John Donne was a man, a poet of enigmas. This may explain why so much more has been written to try to clarify the complexities of this poet than on the simple "poet-saint," Richard Crashaw. Donne had the complexity, the obscurity, the doubt of his shadowy lamp, Descartes; Crashaw had the profound simplicity, the clarity, and the faith of his brilliant light, St. Thomas Aquinas.

And as our treatment of a complex poet was necessarily complicated, so our treatment of a poet who in his profound simplicity kept his eye ever on God will be rendered simple. Another factor which will keep our treatment of Crashaw comparatively uninvolved is that the poem we will discuss is his best-known, and we have the weight of critical authority to evaluate

11 Moloney, John Donne, 107.

its worth for us. Our analysis of "Death Be Not Proud," quite the contrary, was lengthy of necessity, since there is not much authoritative comment specifically directed to that particular sonnet. For that reason, we employed the inductive method in our discussion of Donne, and started with an analysis of the sonnet, working back to the conclusions that Donne in the case of that sonnet had dissociated sensibility as a consequence of his adherence to anthropocentric humanism and the Renaissance dichotomy.

Since we are able to rely on the judgment of competent critics in evaluating Crashaw's A Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable St. Teresa, we will use the deductive method in our treatment of the latter poet. Since the critics agree that it is a poem reflecting a unified sensibility in its third and fullest sense, we will begin by showing that Crashaw first possessed unified sensibility in its first and second meanings, and, as a consequence, had the foundation which made it possible for him to possess unified sensibility in its fullest sense which could produce a great poem such as the Hymn. We will also observe that Crashaw's possession of unified sensibility in the instance of this poem in all three degrees was rendered possible by his adherence to the medieval synthesis and theocentric humanism.

Crashaw was born a High Anglican. But in his mature life the logic of his convictions led him into the Roman Catholic fold. Not many years after his conversion, he died a happy death

as a canon at Lorreto at the early age of thirty-seven. Such was his simple life. And although he enjoyed this life, his eye was ever on the life that was to come. He lived a saintly life, and died a holy death earning him Gosse's epithet "poet-saint."

Crashaw was a devout Anglican seeking the proximate and ultimate ends of life, which we discussed in the first chapter. But in seeking heaven Crashaw came to the conclusion that he must enter the Catholic Church, no matter what temporal disadvantages the step might involve. Helen White lends support to this assertion: "But most students are agreed today, whatever their personal judgment of the wisdom or the rightness of his final course, that in becoming a Catholic Crashaw was carrying to their logical conclusion tendencies present in his work almost from the beginning. Rome was his spiritual destiny."¹² Crashaw's best modern critic, Austin Warren, reiterates White's statement: "In the Catholic Church Crashaw could find all which had been dear to him in the Anglican, and find it accepted as, beyond dispute, valid and valuable."¹³

In embracing Catholicism, all Crashaw's doubts were settled; in embracing Catholicism he knew he had the complete

¹² Helen C. White, The Metaphysical Poets, New York, 1936, 208.

¹³ Austin Warren, Richard Crashaw, University, Louisiana, 1939, 51.

truth. For the principles of Catholicism as stated in the medieval synthesis solved the fundamental problem of reconciling man's temporal goals with his eternal end. And the ramification of that synthesis in theocentric humanism made it possible to reconcile man's natural pursuits with his supernatural quest. In the medieval synthesis all truth is reconciled. So, in embracing Catholicism, Crashaw embraced a philosophy of life which would make it possible for him as a poet to "combine all the truths of human existence into new integral wholes." And his poetry does reflect his capacity to combine such truths, e.g., the co-ordination of temporal and eternal goals. In possessing this capacity, he possesses unified sensibility in its first meaning.

The central theme of Crashaw's poetry is really that of the medieval synthesis and theocentric humanism: "Christ's love and loveableness."¹³ So in view of this theme and end - in his life as in his poetry - Crashaw was able to co-ordinate all the pursuits of this life to his eternal quest. He loved this world, but only in the light of his love of Christ and heaven:

But the conscious asceticism of Crashaw comes fundamentally out of no low opinion of the world, out of no distaste for ordinary living, but out of a very deep passion for the love he has glimpsed, and a belief that it is only by passing beyond the limits of ordinary experience that he may hope to come to that love.¹⁴

¹³ White, The Metaphysical Poets, 236.

¹⁴ Ibid., 238.

Moloney asserts that Crashaw in adhering to the medieval synthesis could put human and Divine love in harmony with each other: "For Crashaw human love is a stepping stone, a foretaste, of the Divine. This synthesis of human and Divine love, I insist, is not a note original with Crashaw; rather it is a surviving medieval characteristic."¹⁵

Grierson remarks on the effect Crashaw's conversion had on his poetry:

In Crashaw's poetry . . . a note is heard which is struck for the first time in the seventeenth century, the accent of a convert to Romanism, the joy of the troubled soul who has found rest and a full expansion of heart in the rediscovery of a faith and ritual and order which give entire satisfaction.¹⁶

Crashaw possessed unified sensibility in its first sense as a result of his allegiance to the medieval synthesis; and this allegiance made it possible for him to possess unified sensibility in its second meaning also. Because of his adherence to a synthesis which harmonizes all objective truth, and "thought" pivoting on that synthesis which he might conceive poetically could arouse in him a proportionate emotion. This was true because such a "thought" was a tenet of which he could be convinced since it was objectively true.

15 Moloney, John Donne, 208.

16 Grierson, Background of English Literature, xlvi.

Such a "thought" was that of death which implies a final judgment on an individual's co-ordination of his temporal and eternal ends, of his natural and supernatural pursuits, i.e., the core of the medieval synthesis. Crashaw lived this co-ordination of the medieval synthesis and Catholicism. As a result, death did not have the fears for him which it had for Donne who had rejected his faith and the synthesis. Crashaw could face death joyfully with clear conscience, knowing that since he had embraced the true faith and had led a blameless life, death was merely the door through which he could pass to his eternal happiness and the possession of God. Thus, instead of addressing death with a weak-kneed taunt as Donne did, Crashaw, in whose case death truly could not be proud in the sense of inducing servile fear, longed for death as his opportunity of being united with God forever. In the Hymn Crashaw speaks of death in this way as something to be longed for. We give the summation of Joan Bennett:

The Hymn to the Name and Honor of the Admirable Saint Teresa is the poem of Crashaw's which has rightly attracted most readers. It is his most complete and adequate expression of his own religious spirit. . . . It is in this poem that Crashaw best succeeds in communicating to his reader his own attitude toward martyrdom, an attitude not merely of admiration, but of envy.¹⁷

That death should be longed for is a truth of which Crashaw is

¹⁷ Joan Bennett, Four Metaphysical Poets, Cambridge, 1934, 62.

convinced, and, therefore, one which is capable of arousing a proportionate emotion. Such convictions underlie Crashaw's other poetry also - indicating that he consistently possessed unified sensibility in this second sense. White is our authority:

The line of development of the usual Crashaw poem is as firm basically as the line of a baroque statue or building, and the logical mass as substantial. . . . Even when the reader feels that he has been swept off his feet by the wind of the poetry, he is being carried steadily to a usually definitive and resonant conclusion. The Nativity hymn and the Teresa poems are superb examples of this.

It is not for nothing that among all the wide range of mystical writers, the mature Crashaw chose for imitation and for praise and for translation two of the most intellectually vigorous, the two who almost more than any other mystic preserve the architectonic power of thought even in the transports of rapture, Teresa of Avila and Thomas Aquinas. For in his own much humbler degree he shows something of the capacity of both for keeping mental control of feeling. Only as with both of these much greater thinkers, there is nothing of the external or restrictive about this control. It is organic and informative.¹⁸

In possessing unified sensibility in its first two senses, Crashaw had the foundation necessary for its possession in its fullest sense. But was he able in the Hymn, and specifically in the section of the Hymn treating of death, to employ "just such sense-images as recreate the 'truth' and 'beauty' of the 'thought' and re-arouse the proportionate emotion?" The critics answer that the selection reflects a unified sensibility (in its third meaning) in the poet of a high degree of excellence.

¹⁸ White, The Metaphysical Poets, 247.

For T. S. Eliot,¹⁹ Grierson,²⁰ and Moloney²¹ and the other critics agree that in his best poems (the Hymn included), Crashaw possessed such a sensibility. Austin Warren, concurring in this opinion, states that of the Teresa poems,

as a poem, the Hymn is much the best of the trio: it has a unity and sequence, a flow and a crescendo which Crashaw was rarely able to contrive. The title, "In Memory of the Virtuous and Learned Lady Madre de Teresa, that sought an early Martyrdom," sounds the central and persistent theme: Martyrdom. Love is "Absolute sole Lord" of life - and death.²²

It would be beyond the scope and intent of this chapter to give the entire poem or even the entire section focusing on death (ll. 110-182) to prove our point, when we have the judgment of competent critics to rely on. We will be content to give a brief digest of the poem.

The poem opens telling of the young Teresa's desire to die a martyr's death among the infidels to show her love of God. God at once denies and fulfills her request - she may not suffer a bloody martyrdom among the Moors; but hers is to be a life of martyrdom: that of a mystic, dying the mystical deaths of love. In such deaths,

19 T. S. Eliot, "The Poems of Richard Crashaw," The Dial, LXXXIV, March, 1928, 249. In this passage, Eliot contrasts Crashaw's full unified sensibility with Shelley's dissociated sensibility.

20 Grierson, Background of English Literature, xlv.

21 Moloney, John Donne, 204.

22 Warren, Richard Crashaw, 143.

God pierces the soul with such darts of fire that pain and joy are simultaneous and of equal strength: joy, because God loves the soul and longs for it and visits it; pain, because God's visitations are temporary, because the body cannot endure the strain put upon it by rapture, because the soul longs for death and perfect union with its Spouse.²³

After such a life, Teresa's death occurs:

When these thy deaths, so numerous,
Shall all at last die into one,
And melt thy soul's sweet mansion
Like a soft lump of incense, hasted
By too hot a fire, and wasted
Into perfuming clouds, so fast
Shalt thou exhale to heav'n at last
In a resolving sigh; and then,
Oh, what? Ask not the tongues of men;
Angels cannot tell; suffice,
Thyself shall feel thine own full joys
And hold them fast forever.²⁴

And Teresa is welcomed to her final reward, the eternal happiness in heaven, by Our Lord, His Mother, the angels, and the souls she has brought there:

Oh, what delight when revealed life shall stand
And teach thy lips heav'n with his hand,
On which thou now mayst to thy wishes
Heap up thy consecrated kisses.
What joys shall seize thy soul when she,
Bending her blessed eyes on thee,
Those second smiles of heaven, shall dart
Her mild rays through thy melting heart! (et Seq.)²⁵

Her life's works and sufferings become part of her glory:

23 Ibid., 144.

24 Richard Crashaw, The Poems English Latin and Greek of Richard Crashaw, ed., L. C. Martin, Oxford, 1927, 320, 11.110-121.

25 Ibid., 11.129-136.

All thy good works which went before
 And waited for thee at the door
 Shall own thee there, and all in one
 Weave a constellation
 Of crowns, with which the King, thy spouse,
 Shall build up thy triumphant brows.

All thy old woes shall now smile on thee,
 And thy pains sit bright upon thee;
 All thy sorrows here shall shine,
 All thy sufferings be divine;
 Tears shall take comfort and turn gems,
 And wrongs repent to diadems.²⁶

Crashaw concludes the poem by stating that, if a person would have a happy eternity such as Teresa's, he must live a life according to the synthesis of Catholicism with its central theme of love of God:

Thou with the Lamb, thy Lord, shalt go,
 And wheresoe'er he sets his white
 Steps, walk with him those ways of light
 Which who in death would live to see.²⁷
 Must learn in life to die like thee.

We have given part of our summary in quotations from the poem to exemplify Crashaw's use of sense-imagery, and his use of the other devices of language and meter. These latter devices produce the grand and glorious musical effect of the poem. The "thought" of the poem states that death is glorious for one who has lived his Catholic faith, and he re-arouses an emotion of glorious joy at death, by not only recreating the "beauty" of such a death through his imagery and its symbolism and ornament, but by the triumphant sweep of the music of his verse. As Warren says,

²⁶ Ibid., 320-321, 11.139-150.

²⁷ Ibid., 321, 11.178-182.

"the Hymn flow(s) with a passionate ease almost unparalleled in Crashaw's work. The metaphors are less crowded and developed to greater length."²⁸

His sense-imagery in its symbolism and in its ornament conveys the total experience: it conveys his "thought" that death is gloriously joyful to and intensely longed for by the good soul, and it recreates the "beauty" of such a death so that it re-arouses the proportionate glorious emotion of triumphant joy in the reader.

Ruth Wallerstein comments on Crashaw's sense-imagery:

With him the images . . . become the thought; . . . the images are transmuted from intellectual forms to imaginative experiences. They have become at once the instrumentalities and the expression of his religious emotion.

.....
Imagery is of supreme significance with Crashaw; in a very special sense his imagery is his meaning. Le style, c'est l'homme.

.....
The true distinction of Crashaw's imagery, both in its abundance and in the mode of its use lies in the attitude toward life it expresses and the way this attitude shapes and transmutes the forms into new molds.²⁹

White complements Wallerstein's remarks in her discussion of Crashaw's use of ornament: "The ornament is, then, not something superimposed or affixed, but something immediately rele-

²⁸ Warren, Richard Crashaw, 146.

²⁹ Ruth Wallerstein, Richard Crashaw: A Study in Style and Poetic Development, Madison, Wisconsin, 1935, 135. 126. 128.

vant that brings out the meaning of the thing ornamented and awakens the mind to an appreciation of it."³⁰ And in her discussion of his use of devices producing music in his verses:

For sheer felicity of expression, in which sound and rhetoric and the movement of the music combine to create the physical vesture of the feeling, probably no English poet has ever quite surpassed Crashaw at his best.³¹

Unlike Donne, Crashaw, in adhering to the medieval synthesis and its reconciliation of flesh and spirit, of emotion and thought, and of sense and intellect, did not shrink with Puritanistic abhorrence from the use of sense images in his poetry; rather, following the "sacramental ideal" derived from the medieval synthesis, he used the sense imagery of human love to portray Divine love: And teach thy lips heav'n with his hand,
On which thou now mayst to thy wishes
Heap up thy consecrated kisses.³² (Emphasis supplied)

Moloney makes the same observation:

This prefiguring of Divine Love in terms of the human is only one aspect of Crashaw's exceedingly bold use of sensuous imagery, the aesthetic justification of which rested upon an acceptance of the sacramental idealism of the Middle Ages.³³

Warren, in amplifying Moloney's consideration, hints that Crashaw,

30 White, The Metaphysical Poets, 249.

31 Ibid., 256.

32 Crashaw, The Poems of Richard Crashaw, 320, 130-132.

33 Moloney, John Donne, 208.

in employing sense-imagery after the manner of the "sacramental idealism" of the medieval synthesis, borrowed some of his technique from St. Ignatius Loyola:

In the spirit of St. Ignatius' Exercitia Spiritualia Crashaw performs an "Application of the Senses" upon all the sacred themes of his meditation. God transcends our images as He transcends our reason; but, argues the Counter-Reformation, transcension does not imply abrogation. Puritanism opposes the senses and the imagination to truth and holiness; for Catholicism, the former may be ministering angels. . . . Not iconoclasts, some censors would grant that visual imagery, emanating from the "highest" of the senses, may point from the seen to the unseen; there they would halt. Crashaw, like one persistent school of mystics, would boldly appropriate the whole range of sensuous experience as symbolic of the inner life.

Style must incarnate spirit. Oxymoron, paradox, and hyperbole are figures necessary to the articulation of the Catholic faith. Crashaw's conceits, by their infidelity to nature, claim allegiance to the supernatural; his baroque imagery, engaging the senses, intimates a world which transcends them.³⁴

We conclude that the high degree of excellence in which Crashaw possesses unified sensibility in its fullest sense as exhibited in the Hymn is to be attributed to his solid embracing of the medieval synthesis, and its ramification in the theocentric humanism and "sacramental idealism." Living the synthesis, not only made Crashaw a great poet, it made him a saint. Rightly is he called the "poet-saint."

³⁴ Warren, Richard Crashaw, 189-190, 193.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Mr. Philip T. Mooney, S.J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

August 9, 1954
Date

Rev. John B. Conrath, S.J.
Signature of Adviser